



Office of Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh
Press Clips
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- [The AEA, Alabama's teacher group, loses main funding source \(AP\)](#)
- [Raytheon shows off Huntsville operations to Business Council of Alabama's manufacturing committee \(AL.com\)](#)
- [Gov. Robert Bentley appoints members to new Alabama Workforce Council \(AL.com\)](#)
- [What grade did Alabama make in small business friendliness? See full statewide report card \(AL.com\)](#)
- [John Richardson replaces Hugh McCall at Public Safety \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)
- [Tea Party groups predicted Fed's plan to house illegals in Alabama, asked Bentley to intervene \(Yellowhammer News\)](#)

[The AEA, Alabama's teacher group, loses main funding source \(AP\)](#)

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — The future for one the largest and best financed organizations in the state, the Alabama Education Association, is uncertain now that its main funding source ended.

The group can no longer use payroll deduction to collect dues from its 95,000 members. Spokeswoman Amy Marlowe said most of the teachers, school support workers and administrators who are association members have used payroll deductions, but the organization has been busy getting them to sign up for bank drafts.

The group hasn't released how many have signed up, but Marlowe said, "It's our new way of life."

The payroll deductions for political organizations got prohibited by a state law that Republicans passed just a month after they took control of the Legislature in November 2010. Its enforcement was delayed until this week because of a legal challenge filed by the association.

"The law was absolutely targeted at AEA," Marlowe said.

The sponsor of the law, Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said payroll deductions are almost out of sight and out of mind. With bank drafts, members will see the payment each month on their bank statements and may look more closely at what the teachers association is doing, he said.

"That's the biggest challenge AEA has. They are a liberal organization that supports other liberal organizations, and many of their members are not," Marsh said.

Marsh was one of several senators who supported the law and beat AEA-funded opponents in the Republican primary on June 3.

Association-supported candidates did beat five incumbent House members.

That election showed the financial influence of AEA with payroll deduction. It reported spending nearly \$7 million. In contrast, another large, influential group, the Business Council of Alabama, reported spending \$1.5 million.

"We are about the only voice of dissension left in town."

Jess Brown, a political science professor at Athens State University, said the education association doesn't have the close personal relationship with its members that it had in the past, and the law will cause it to take a hit in membership, although it's too early to say how many.

"AEA will remain an influential player on Goat Hill, but the old gray mare ain't what she used to be," said Brown, who has been a member in the past.

Byrdie Larkin, a political science professor at Alabama State University, said ordinary citizens don't monitor the Alabama Legislature. She said the Republican-backed law won't weaken the association if its members believe it is doing a good job monitoring the Legislature and representing members' views at the Statehouse.

"When they have a strong history like the AEA, I don't think the Republican Party will be successful," said Larkin, who is a member of the American Federation of Teachers.

When Democrats controlled the Legislature, they passed a law that allowed members of public employee groups to have their dues and contributions to the groups' political action committees deducted from their paychecks.

The 2010 law sponsored by Marsh ended that for any group that used the deductions for political activity. AEA challenged it in federal court and got a judge to block enforcement of the law until recently.

In a separate case filed in state court, a Shelby County judge ordered school systems to end payroll deductions to any PAC or membership organization unless those organizations certified by Monday that they were in compliance with the law and no longer involved in political activity.

Marlowe said AEA couldn't have done that and still represented its members' interests.

"We are about the only voice of dissension left in town," she said.

A supporter of the 2010 law, Republican House Speaker Mike Hubbard of Auburn said payroll deductions gave the association an unfair advantage over other lobbying groups that have to get members to write checks for dues.

"The end of AEA's payroll deduction is a win for Alabama taxpayers," Hubbard said. "It is simply unfair that Alabamians were spending their hard earned tax dollars to help advance any labor union's political agenda."

[Raytheon shows off Huntsville operations to Business Council of Alabama's manufacturing committee \(AL.com\)](#)

The important role manufacturing plays in the Alabama economy was highlighted last week as a Business Council of Alabama committee visited one of Huntsville's major defense companies.

Raytheon hosted the gathering of BCA's manufacturing advocacy council, which includes representatives from throughout the state. The group heard economic updates from Fred McCallum, president of AT&T Alabama; Alabama Senate Pro Tem Del Marsh; Chad Moutray, chief economist with the National Association of Manufacturers; and Dr. Joe Morton, president of the Business Education Alliance of Alabama.

The group also toured Raytheon's missile integration facility on Redstone Arsenal and received an update from Randy Stevenson, Weapon Integration Center Director for Raytheon Missile Systems. In addition to engineering operations, Raytheon produces the Standard Missile-3 and SM-6 in North Alabama.

BCA's visit gave Raytheon a chance to showcase the work being done in Huntsville, Stevenson said.

Alabama is leading the way when it comes to business.

"We're here to perform a job and we're here to create jobs," Stevenson said. "It's always good to give the opportunity for others to see that."

In turn, it then falls on BCA to help promote efforts for Alabama's economic growth, according to William Canary, president and CEO of the BCA.

"Alabama is leading the way when it comes to business," said Canary, citing recent examples such as Remington's announcement it was relocating major operations to the state. "It's important to get the message out across the country."

[Gov. Robert Bentley appoints members to new Alabama Workforce Council \(AL.com\)](#)

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- An Alabama Power Company executive will chair a new panel intended to help schools and colleges better prepare students for jobs in business and industry.

Gov. Robert Bentley named 28 people to the Alabama Workforce Council, which will be chaired by Zeke Smith, executive vice president of external affairs for Alabama Power.

The council will advise and support the state Board of Education, two-year colleges and four-year colleges and universities.

"Preparing Alabama workers for high-wage, high-demand jobs is our number one priority," Bentley said in a statement.

Smith said communication between industry and educators is important.

"I am optimistic the council will make a difference helping our educational leaders develop a robust workforce that can step right in and fill the needs of industry and business," Smith said.

The creation of the Workforce Council is one of the recommendations of the Governor's College and Career Ready Task Force, which was formed last year.

The council's other recommendations included streamlining workforce development functions, teaching students about job needs in business and industry, identifying unmet needs such as specialty skills in specific areas, and others.

The Workforce Council is scheduled to hold its first meeting July 21 in Montgomery.

[What grade did Alabama make in small business friendliness? See full statewide report card \(AL.com\)](#)

A study released today by California-based Thumbtack shows Alabama's small business friendliness dipped from an A+ in 2013 to a B- this year.

In partnership with the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, Thumbtack surveyed more than 12,000 U.S. small business owners to determine the ranking.

"After a two-month survey of thousands of small business owners nationwide, we've been able to hear directly from Alabama's small business community about how they view the state," said Jon Lieber, chief economist of Thumbtack. "Creating a business climate that is welcoming to small, dynamic businesses is more important than ever, and Alabama has some work to do to make this happen."

Alabama, which received an A- in small business friendliness in 2012, was one of the worst states in the U.S. for hiring new workers, according to the report. Small business owners also gave Alabama's training and networking programs an F.

The survey showed Alabama's employment, labor and hiring regulations received an A-, while the state was fifth in the nation in business owners being prepared for the controversial Affordable Care Act.

"Alabama small businesses were the most pessimistic in the nation about the state of the national economy," the report said.

Utah, Idaho, Texas, Virginia and Louisiana were the top-rated states for small business friendliness. Rhode Island, Illinois, California, Connecticut and New Jersey were the lowest-rated.

Here is Alabama's complete 2014 report card:

Overall friendliness = B+

Ease of starting a business = C-

Ease of hiring = D

Regulations = C+

Health and safety = C+

Employment, labor and hiring = A-

Tax code = C+

Licensing = C

Environmental = C-

Zoning = B+

Training and networking programs = F

John Richardson replaces Hugh McCall at Public Safety (Montgomery Advertiser)

John Richardson, a former enforcement official with the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, was named acting Director of Public Safety Tuesday, replacing Col. Hugh McCall, a longtime veteran of the department.

A press release from Gov. Robert Bentley's office announcing Richardson's appointment did not discuss the status of McCall, a 34-year veteran of DPS who had served as director of the agency since 2011. Jennifer Ardis, a spokeswoman for Gov. Bentley, said in a follow-up interview that McCall retired on Monday.

"The governor wishes Col. McCall nothing but the best," she said.

DPS directed questions to the Governor. Attempts to reach McCall Tuesday were not immediately successful.

In his announcement, Bentley called Richardson "a dedicated law enforcement officer."

"He is a strong leader and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Alabama Department of Public Safety," he said.

Richardson has also worked as an undercover narcotics officer and served with the U.S. Marines.

"As we move forward with the consolidation of state law enforcement in the coming months, I pledge to continue this longstanding commitment to the citizens of Alabama, while working toward providing a more effective and efficient department," Richardson said in the statement.

DPS, along with other law enforcement agencies, is being consolidated under a new Alabama Law Enforcement Agency. The DPS director currently has cabinet-level status, but that will end in January, when Richardson will report to Spencer Collier, the state's Secretary of Law Enforcement.

The Legislature approved the consolidation in 2013 amid protests from members of the Legislative Black Caucus, who said it would effectively undermine the director's authority.

"We have fought long and hard to have diversity in Public Safety in this state, and it was a long, hard fought battle," said Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, during the debate. "You finally get a person (McCall) who worked his way up the system, and then you come up with a bill where you want to take all the authority away from that individual."

The backers of the consolidation said it would save money and make better use of the state's law enforcement resources.

Richardson will take the title of Colonel. Despite the word "acting" in front of his title, Ardis said that the Governor is not considering any other candidates for the position. The "acting" part of his title will be dropped after consolidation takes place.

[Tea Party groups predicted Fed's plan to house illegals in Alabama, asked Bentley to intervene \(Yellowhammer News\)](#)

Yellowhammer broke the news on Tuesday that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) plans to house illegal immigrant children at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) in Anniston, Ala. Many of them were apprehended at the U.S. border, which is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis brought on by children being sent across unaccompanied.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Saks) responded swiftly, penning a letter to HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson voicing his opposition to the proposal.

But prior to the Obama Administration announcing the move, a coalition of Alabama Tea Party leaders predicted it was coming and wrote a letter to Alabama Gov. Bentley asking him to intervene.

In a letter dated June 23, the Tea Party groups wrote to Bentley, in part:

We the People of Alabama respectfully request that Gov. Bentley (and our elected State Senators and Representatives) take a proactive stand by writing the Director of FEMA and the Sec. of Health and Human Services. We must tell them that Alabama cannot support lawlessness, nor do we have resources available to house illegal aliens in our communities. Governor Bentley should also demand prior notification regarding any plan involving Alabama. Our children and our interests must be protected by not allowing any of these manufactured "refugees" from being sent to Alabama. A Country without a border is chaos!

It is unclear what, if anything, the governor's office can do to stop the Obama Administration from housing the illegal immigrants at the CDP, because it is a federally-controlled facility. Yellowhammer reached out to the governor's office for comment and will update this story when we hear back.

The full letter from the Tea Party groups can be read below.

Dear Governor Bentley:

As always, "We Dare Defend Our Rights," our Sovereign State and border. The situation on the US southern border is of grave concern. While everyone has sympathy for the plight of any child, we are first charged to defend Alabama's children. Alabama has its own issues to contend with which include, unemployment, fighting the EPA, the overcrowded prison system, and the disagreement over how to educate our own children, just to mention a few. We agree with President Obama when he stated; "Our laws should respect families following the rules instead of splitting them apart." The US should send these children back to their families as soon as possible. Warehousing them in various corners of the US will only hinder this process.

If President Obama ignores his Constitutional Duty to defend this nation against a tide of illegals, and Congress sits idle while the Attorney General seeks lawyers to defend these illegals, then the duty falls on our States. Our own Senator Sessions penned an article calling Obama's action "lawless." Also, the invaders streaming across our southern border are not all children. Many reports and photos show older men and gang members in the mix.

The United States has a legal immigration system, and we all agree that legal immigration has always added to the fabric of this nation. Once assimilated into the methods of the left, illegals will create a voting block that will overwhelm our system, create a new permanent underclass, and destroy middle class America.

We the People of Alabama respectfully request that Gov. Bentley (and our elected State Senators and Representatives) take a proactive stand by writing the Director of FEMA and the Sec. of Health and Human Services. We must tell them that Alabama cannot support lawlessness, nor do we have resources available to house illegal aliens in our communities. Governor Bentley should also demand prior notification regarding any plan involving Alabama.

Our children and our interests must be protected by not allowing any of these manufactured "refugees" from being sent to Alabama. A Country without a border is chaos!